

Answer to FOIA Question 2: The following are name-redacted emails from employees who reported health complaints that they attributed to the chemical substance release on the 5th Floor. 22 employees (which included the employees quoted here) saw a Federal Occupational Health physician in the office. Report of those meetings is also attached.

Employee 1:

8/14/14: I filled out the form. Again, I don't know if my illness is related but think I should document my symptoms just in case. Do you need a copy of the form?

Employee 2:

8/01/14: are you available to talk to the doctor sometime on Wednesday morning? There is no requirement for you to talk to the doctor. But you had a reaction just from walking down there and I'm thinking it may help us to get to the bottom of it if he heard your story.

Employee 3:

7/24/14: A couple of my folks have been affected as well XXXXXX when he simply went down to the kitchen area and XXXXXXXX -- scratchy throat.

Employee 4:

7/28/15: Cheryl sent this email to me this AM. I filled out the form below and emailed to Ms. Barbour-Swann. I spoke to her before sending and she told me that it's my decision if I send it to managers as it has my personal information. As for coming in to select cubes, I do not feel comfortable doing that as I have been affected each time, with this time on last Wed. the strongest.

Employee 5:

2/4/15: Did a full test today by staying through the whole MCRB Branch meeting in PYN 5771 and follow up meetings and conversations on the west and northwest portions of the fifth floor from 10 AM to 11:35 AM. Got eye, nose and throat irritation along with that itchy skin, scalp and upper torso during and after the time spent there. Still have residual issues even this afternoon. Will fill out the OSHA/EPA 201 form and submit. Since I have barely been in the office since December 18th between holidays, funerals and sick leave I was uncertain what to expect. My few days in the office the end of January and this week I have consistent low level responses when I was on the floor but today was a lot worse. This is really frustrating.

Employee 6:

8/18/14: I have been testing my reaction to the spray in my old office space. I occasionally go down to my old office to retrieve some supplies I need that I did not bring over when I moved and I spend not even 3-5 minutes in that area and I feel dizzy and become hoarse. My question is: has a quality air check been done for the 5th floor to make sure the residue from the spray is not still present? Something is causing my symptoms to reoccur when I go in my old space.

Employee 7:

7/28/14: Please find attached a copy of my OSHA-EPA 301 Injury, Incident & Near Miss Report related to the July 3, 2014 insecticide incident at Potomac Yard North. Should you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

8/1/14: Yes, I am available on Wednesday morning. I also visited my personal doctor this past Wednesday, and I can bring the write-up with me. Just let me know when/ where I need to be.

8/5/14: I am experiencing symptoms from the insecticide incident at Potomac Yard, and have attached a new 301 associated with the incident.

8/6/14: I am not sure if the schedule has changed, but I have not heard from the occupational physician yet. He was supposed to call at 8:30 am. Any chance that I can be put back on the schedule for a call later in the day? I am still experiencing symptoms from yesterday - tightness in the chest, metallic taste in the mouth, irritated throat, and sore/ irritated roof of my mouth. I submitted another OSHA/ EPA 301 yesterday. Please let me know if there is any other actions I need to take.

8/7/14: I seem to be developing a similar pattern where, after being in the office for a short time, I develop symptoms and need to get out of the building. I'm better today - after being away from the office for two days.

Employee 8:

7/31/14: I would like a time slot please. I went to the 5th floor around 1 pm this afternoon and my throat started burning and tightening up. So I went up to the 6th floor where it lessened. I would like a 9 am meeting. In the future I am going to call in to any 5th floor meeting I have.

8/13/14: Thanks for your help on the 5th floor/Potomac Yards North pesticide incident related employee health issues. My throat is still from time to time irritated. I must be sensitive to the pesticide. I would like to move my cube to one that is not under/near a vent.

Employee 9:

7/28/14: Per your request in the email below, I am submitting an Incident Report form. I did see the nurse at the health unit, the only thing she did was put a note in my file. Thursday and Friday of last week, I was experiencing a burning in my throat, slight cough and a raspy voice. These symptoms diminished and went away over the weekend, but returned this morning.

8/25/14: I would rather wait on moving to another corner of the 6th floor. I have had a lingering cough since leaving the work space at EPA. I have an appointment scheduled with my medical practitioner, but not until next week - she's been on vacation.

9/16/14: Not on the sixth floor. I did step down to the fifth floor to chat with Steve Hoffman and test it out. I continue to have a reaction from that space area.

10/14/14: I was down on the fifth floor last week for a meeting and continue to experience problems (burning in the throat).

2/2/14: I won't be in the office this week. I'm still experiencing the effects from last week's exposure -- sore throat, cough, a slight burning in the throat. I need to wait for this to clear completely prior to attempting another space.

5/28/14: I was in my cubicle in PY South 5242 today waiting for my computer to be returned, which didn't occur until noon. Early on my lips started to get the numbing feeling that I have described before. As time went on, the whole right side of my face felt that way. I couldn't leave, as I had to be present for the computer return. I have since left (12:35) and it is beginning to subside.

Employee 10:

8/7/15: I was asked to contact my physician again after my visit with the Federal Occupational Physician yesterday. Based upon the information from Dr. Holland and the fact that I am still exhibiting symptoms this long after the incident, my physician is recommending that I not go back to the 5th floor until such time as the building is cleared as safe by certified environmental/health professionals. He has also made additional recommendations that I will not discuss here. As you know, I have been working about half days in the building until such time as I could no longer work and then have been going home under episodic telework. I will be doing that from this point forward until we can come up with some other solution. It is frustrating to me as I can't be as efficient working from home. For today I have 4 conference calls so it works out fine. Please let me know if there is any other forms that I should be filling out.

8/11/15: Just so you have the full story, my doctor indicated that I should not return to the 5th floor until such time as it is deemed safe by the appropriate health and safety experts. In addition, the occupational physician mentioned to me during my interview with him last week about the recommendations he had already made. From my own experience, the longer you wait to do those studies, the longer it will take them to make that call.

8/19/15: I came in to get my new badge and password. I have only been here 5 minutes and can still feel the same thing in my throat. I have been home for all last week and did not feel a thing. Something is still not right.

8/19/15: I stayed only two hours today and I really can't handle it anymore. The same burning sensation has returned to my throat. I did not have that during the last week I worked from home.

8/28/15: Thanks for the reports. Look forward to discussing today. Just as a data point, I have been out of the office for 2 weeks and came in today for the meeting. Within 5 minutes of being here, I still experience the same symptoms that I did almost 2 months ago.

9/15/15: Just to let you know I had to come into work for a short while today due to a family emergency. Within 5 minutes my throat was burning and this time my eyes were watering also. So, 2 and half months later and I don't notice one bit of an improvement.

10/20/15: I went to my doctor's appointment today concerning the issue of why I still have symptoms related to the July 3rd, 2014 pesticide release incident whenever I enter the 5th floor. My doctor indicated that unless I used an inhaler while in the workplace I would likely continue to exhibit the same symptoms until the source of the release was completely removed from the office environment. He also mentioned that it is likely that I and other who were exposed were sensitized to whatever the breakdown chemicals were in the product that was allowed into the workplace and sat for that long, to these chemicals from now on. I asked him if I used that same product that is considered safe what would happen, he said for me and likely for others that were exposed, it could mean I end up in the hospital or doctor's office. I am passing this on, because based upon this, I have no idea when I can return to the office unless I am going to take medicines I did not choose to. I am also passing this on because other employees that were exposed on that day and over the month before they were informed may need to hear and understand this for their own health. I guess that is now your responsibility based upon what management has asked you to do during our all hands meeting. If I was to take these medicines that my doctor indicates would be needed to work in this environment, I would like to know who is going to pay for my medical expenses, doctor's appointments, long term care, ect.? All the documented accounts of the incident that have been provided by employees and individuals contracted by the government indicate that it was a manager that applied the pesticide and by doing so unknowingly expose individuals to this chemical without their knowledge of consent. Please advise soon, so I know what appropriate actions to take on behalf of myself and my health and others that may be in the same situation.

1/22/15: I have been up on the 6th floor for about 1.5 hours now.....the first hour was fine, however I am beginning to feel that same burning sensation in the back of my throat that I did on the 5th floor. I will admit that it took longer to affect me than on the 5th floor, however the result is the same. I will stay until noon and then go home unless you have some other option that you can think of.

2/14/15: I came in on Saturday to unpack my boxes because I did not want to bother the others in my new work area by unpacking. I unpacked 3 boxes and the same reaction in my throat began again. It got so bad that I had to leave the area. I am wondering if anyone ever cleaned my work cubicle on the 5th floor? Because if I can use my materials because it causes a reaction we are back to square one. It is clear to me that this had nothing to do with the South Building because I did not have that feeling in the three days I was there. We may need to come up with some way of cleaning my materials before I open any other boxes. I am open to any other suggestions you may have.

Employee 11:

8/01/14: What I want to report this – I was at home teleworking on July 3 and was not here in the office when the insecticide spray incident occurred. [I had not heard about the incident until people started moving to our side of the 5th FL office.] I came back to office on July 7; felt weak on Saturday, July 12 (throat irritated, vomited, no appetite, muscle and joint pain) and started having rashes on Sunday night, July 13. The rashes came and disappeared frequently for more than 10 days, mostly appeared on my abdominal, upper legs, knees, and right upper arm. The rashes have subsided and only come once or twice a day now. When itching, I take 2 tablets of Benadryl to calm itchiness. I took a picture this Wednesday, July 30, showing the rashes and redness of my left upper leg (near my knee area). I still took 2 tablets of Benadryl tablets last night when rashes started again. I had PCV-13 vaccine shot (preventing pneumonia for people over 50) on July 11. Originally I thought my reaction might be related to the shot. I spoke with my doctor, but he did not think the shot could have caused my rashes for this long. He recommended me to take an allergic test in a hospital, but I have had a chance doing so. These occurrences have been happening when I am in the office and at home as well. I teleworked yesterday and rashes came in the morning and in the evening as well. I feel some kind(s) of toxin(s) might have been in my system. My skin now become sensitive to the environment (room temperature), clothing/fabric, and foods.

8/27/14: This is to update you - my hives had appeared on and off (in the areas of my abdominal, upper arms and upper legs) for 7 weeks (starting July 7 to August 21) and finally went away last Thursday. I discussed this with my primary care physician about my symptom and he did not believe it was caused by the PCV13 vaccine shot that I had on June 25. He also told me that chemical residue or toxins might take weeks or a couple of months to be out of our bodies. Anyway, I am glad that my hives have finally gone.

7/9/14: I took the liberty to work from home today until I heard more about the steps taken to remove the chemical that caused my asthma to flare up yesterday morning. My reaction yesterday was a seal bark cough that was so forceful at times, I felt like I was choking, my whole body was engaged/contracted in the most severe coughs.

I left the area no later than 10am, but the coughing for that period of time made me feel weak and light headed. The coughing nearly subsided once removed from the area, but my chest is still sore. Do we know if air filters were replaced or carpet area cleaned or even vent cleaning? Is there anyway the windows could be OPENED to just forcibly air the place out?

7/16/14: I will just rest today from yesterday's drama and give my lungs a chance to heal. My back is tender and I've had this problem before (I was on the 6th floor then), where I had an irritation of the lining of my lungs. I was sick and on antibiotics for 3 weeks then. I did not attribute it to anything in the building. Anyway, I know how it feels when my lungs have been overworked for a while.

I think my body's response yesterday was a build up from last week and my not seeking medical attention earlier. I felt it last Tuesday with the forceful coughing and I left early. I worked from home last Wednesday, but my chest was sore from the coughing. I came back in on Thursday, yes it bothered me on Thursday, but not as much and I felt I would be able to handle it, so long as it was

subsiding. When I left the building for lunch last Thursday, there was almost NO coughing. I did not seek medical attention last week. I believe yesterday was a build up from last week.

It was sometime after 8 am yesterday morning, when I just didn't feel well at all. I felt so bad I knew I shouldn't just get in someone's car and go home, I felt I needed to be seen by the nurse and possibly follow up with my doctor. I felt bad, I had tightness in my chest from my forceful coughing that morning. I also had a headache. Sometimes my forceful coughing (reactive airway asthma) is so forceful, if it's continued over time it hurts my chest and I get lightheaded.

Since I have a history of high blood pressure (although controlled), I didn't want to misread my symptoms to the coughing ONLY; I thought I needed to be seen.

My blood pressure reading in the nurse's office was the HIGHEST I've ever seen, for me. I was VERY concerned. My numbers were 177/106 and yes I took my medication in the morning.

I had taken two ibuprofen, because of the chest tightness. The nurse allowed me to lay down for 30 minutes and then offered to re check my pressure. She also gave me two puffs of albuterol, which immediately helped with the chest tightness.

After I woke up, my numbers were the same and I called my doctor. My doctor wanted me to go to an Urgent Care facility or ER. The nurse wanted to call an ambulance. Considering I was in Virginia, thinking about my kids and being too far away, and feeling better despite my pressure readings. I wanted to go to a facility I've been to before in Maryland.

Before leaving the nurses office my readings were even higher 193/113.

By the way my coughing had greatly subsided in the nurse's office. I returned to the 5th floor to gather my things and tell Linda, then Reggie was pulled over and I believe the building manager lady. My coughing had picked back up again. For the record my coughing subsided after the nebulizer treatment did not cease until about a 90 minutes after the treatment and possibly the oral steroid kicked in.

I checked into the ER with a blood pressure reading at 17#/10#. Within a short time I met with the doctor who asked for my history. I told him about the chemical spill at the office that happened almost two weeks ago and my forceful coughing. I explained my first day in the office last week and Thursday. The doctor felt my pressure readings were elevated but not "critical" and since I had no sign of renal failure he felt it was my body's "fight or flight response" to the foreign chemical in my body. He felt within a few hours I would see my pressure readings drop, once I receive an oral steroid and nebulizer treatment and stay away from the office until the chemical is gone. He felt that would take 24 hours. By the time I checked out of the ER, my lower number had come down to 100. By the time I went to bed last night, my lower number had come down to 88. This morning my upper number has dropped to a normal range as well. He was right. My discharge papers do not have the level of detail I have in this email, so I will try to get a copy of the notes, if that may be needed. I follow up with my doctor on Friday afternoon.

7/21/14: I will need yet another day. I seemed to have reached a plateau with healing. I've completed my medicine, however, with any subtle cough I have tightness in the chest and aching muscles in the back, I felt as bad Saturday evening and Sunday morning as I did last Wednesday. It wasn't bad enough for me to go back to the ER, but my doctor wants me to see a Pulmonologist.

7/22/14: I'm just getting back on line from a visit to the butcher, baker and the candlestick maker. The appointment was at 9:30am and I must say they were thorough, or at least I felt they were. I was seen by a respiratory therapist who ran me through a few Pulmonary Function Tests, which wore me out but in the long run made me feel better. Then the Pulmonologist, then sent for an x-ray; "butcher, baker, candlestick maker".

QUESTION::: The Pulmonologist asked if the area affected by the pesticide was evaluated and cleaned by some Industrial Environmental (blah blah) team of folk. I told him, I wasn't sure, but I thought it was the typical maintenance staff. His question lead me to believe it may make a difference, so I am passing the question on to you. He also asked if some air quality evaluation was done. I think everything appears to be OK, it's my resistant cough that is keeping me from completely healing. I will be picking up a stronger medication this evening and I'll take that for a few weeks and go in for a follow up.

7/29/14: I'm in the office this morning and I went from NO coughing to coughing again. It's not as severe, but ... a body can only take so much coughing. I've walked the floors for a temporary space location and things are a bit tight on the 6th floor, but there are a few possibilities on the 5th. Can I make a temporary move to N5812 as a first option and N5821 as a second option?

8/5/14: Last week I came in on Tuesday and my asthma flared up, I was able to function, but the coughing rendered me useless Wednesday. Should I put in for SICK leave for that day or Admin leave? Also the situation has slightly improved, but my asthma has still flared up from arriving to work this morning. I'd like to use Episodic Telework for the remaining two days this week and I'd like a suggestion for next week. I am open to keep coming in for a day a week to see if the situation has improved enough to stop aggravating my asthma, but on the other hand I could be slowing down the healing process. What are your thoughts?

8/21/14: I feel my asthma is somewhat stable, which is a step in the right direction, but I am on a boat load of medication for this 'stable', and I try to stay in a controlled air environment. I have had some stomach issues due to a side effect of one of the medications, so (laughing) I now have to take TUMS or something like that to counter the impact. I am also taking peak flow measures three times a day. Managing my breathing has become a bit of a part time job.

Whatever happened on July 3rd, I think I kept doing myself in by coming into the office and coughing, and coming back in and coughing and coughing and.....now my asthma flares up with things that did not bother me before this incident. I have been referred to a Pulmonologist that is connected with one of the university's in the area. They are supposed to be more experienced with addressing RADS and I am hoping they will have a course of treatment and better idea of timing.

9/3/14: My asthma has been stable within the last 10 days, however, my lung function is still not where it was before the incident. For now I am happy to see "stable".

9/22/14: I have met with my doctor this morning and there has been some progress in my recovery, but I am still not back to where I was before this incident in the office. Nonetheless, given the fact that no further cleaning is in sight, I have a strategy for reentering the work environment based on my doctor's recommendation.

Firstly, I am scheduled to have a C/T Scan tomorrow, to see any damage has been done to my lung tissue. (We are cautiously optimistic that this finding will be NULL, but it's a necessary step). My doctor would like me to have a Full PFT BEFORE returning to the office, so I have moved up my originally scheduled test from October 16th to October 6th. So let's say I come back into the office on Thursday October 9th. That will give a few days for the results of the October 6th report. When coming back into the office, I was told to try a few hours initially and gradually move up to a full day, and so on. My doctor has recommended that I take my PEAK flow measure in the morning or prior to entering the building and take it again after about an hour or two. If the numbers begin to dip, that is a sign of a setback, BEFORE I get too short of breath. I don't want to end up back in the ER. I realize that I can work on another floor, but my work does involve interaction with others on the 5th floor, and I don't see how I can avoid the "area in question". So my first few hours back will be on the 5th floor and we'll go from there. If I have a reaction, then I'll move to an open space elsewhere and see if visiting the 5th floor to meet with coworkers will be OK. I think you get the idea.

10/14/14: I've been in for about 30 minutes and my coughing started up within 10 minutes, so I will scope out an area on the 6th floor.

10/16/14: I came directly to the 6th floor this morning, and thank you for my phone, mouse and speedy set up. As it turns out I have an extra laptop at my desk and I know you want to keep track of this property. For the record, my asthmatic symptoms started upon entering the elevator and has not stopped, HOWEVER, the coughing has not led to spasms or been as severe. So that's good and still not good. I'm here until 8:30am this morning.

10/20/14: I came into the office twice last week and I experienced adverse reactions both times. My reaction was worst on the 5th floor; I had coughing spasms that cut my air circulation. My reaction on the 6th floor was not as severe, but there was still a reactive cough while on the 6th floor. My cough was enough to raise concern from those sitting around me. I had to assure them I was NOT contagious with anything. One of my doctors expressed concern for my being in the office AND still having this reaction, but she wanted to wait to hear what another doctor had to say. We are currently waiting for another doctor's input. This other doctor is in a much larger organization and it has taken over a week for them to receive the results of my lung function test. Apparently, there is a "minimal inefficiency" in my lungs ability to pass air. I do not know if the doctors feel this is due to the pesticide incident at work, some other irritant in the building or my lungs just in need of more time to heal. At this point, I would like to continue to work from home, on medical flexiplace, until I hear from the doctor and some additional consensus is reached.

11/18/14: I am still having a reaction on the 8th floor. I saw Roy this morning and mentioned it to him, so he is aware. I also mentioned it to Linda during our meeting.

12/04/14: I have had off and on asthma like symptoms since Monday night, with chest tightness coming and going, coughing and occasional chills. NO fever. Since I already have some symptoms already, I don't think I'll be a good read for the south towers until I'm better. I will be heading to the CVS "minute clinic" for a checkup soon, my doctor didn't have any openings until Monday.

12/04/14: Thank you. I have been able to telework. The symptoms are there, they are noticeable, I've sat on an electric blanket for the chills. Today my hands have lost color. Doesn't seem to be impacting me TOO much aside I'm ready to bed earlier at night. I didn't even bother my doctor's about it until today. It's just lingering a bit and it may be something. I had a flu shot while I was in the office on the first day it came to PY, but one doctor mentioned it could be that. I'll head out to a minute clinic that is less than 5 miles from me around my lunch break. I expect to continue working when I return. If my symptoms take a turn for the worst or I need more than lunch-break, I'll put in a leave slip.

12/04/14: I am just getting in from Patient Frist. I have bronchitis in my left and right bronchial "tree"; it's worst on the right side, which explains the chest tightness/pain on the right side. Still no fever. I was given an antibiotic. The doctor does not want me to work on Friday, even though I mentioned I work from home. I asked the doctor how I got this, considering I'm not really around people that much. He feels I am susceptible to these type of airborne illnesses given my diagnosis of RADS.

12/10/14: I had an asthmatic reaction in the South building, as well. I settled into the empty space in a training room on the 4th floor PYS, but my coughing seem to pick up and I had to leave in less than an hour. The cough lingered, although not as persistent for a few hours after leaving the building. Being on the main floor with the front doors opening and closing was a help. Fortunately, I don't pass out or anything, but there's some sort of buildup that gets worst with time spent in the space. Linda mentioned that I need more medical documentation on top of what I have already provided. If I remember correctly, I think you need a presumed "end date" and to date all doctors have been open ended, as they really don't know how long it will take me to resume to the point I was prior to the July 2014 incident. I will leave messages to see if anyone will document a time span for when we can reassess and see if things have resolved themselves. That may be easy enough to come by. The updated note says pretty much the same except a recommendation to continue to work from home or in a different building. The doctor's feel if I can continue to work from home then I should, however, I get the impression that we need to expect this to come to a resolution at some point. I just had yet another test today and honestly I'm tired of tests and evaluations. I'm so tired, but I will need about 7 to 10 days for the results to be interpreted and see what steps are required moving forward. Two doctors felt my bronchitis last week was a result from my compromised airways, but I want to check with one more doctor to see if they agree with this assessment.

